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(54) Title: GAMING DEVICE HAVING IMPROVED OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE GAME WITH MASKED OFFERS

(57) Abstract:

GAMING DEVICE HAVING IMPROVED OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE GAME WITH MASKED OFFERS

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DESCRIPTION

 The present invention relates in general to a gaming device having an
improved offer and acceptance game.

15

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

 Gaming devices, such as slot machines, having primary and secondary
or bonus games or schemes are well known. One well known bonus game
provides a player with a series of award offers consisting of credits or dollars.
20 The player may either accept each award offer or reject each award offer;
however, the player must accept the final award offer. If the player accepts an
award offer, the player keeps the award offered to the player. If the player
rejects the award offer, the gaming device provides another award offer to the
player except if the award offer is the final award offer. The award offers are
25 randomly determined from a series of award offers of differing values.

 While this type of gaming device has achieved significant popularity in
the gaming industry, after playing the game repeatedly, players may lose
interest in the game. Accordingly, there is a need for new gaming devices
related to this type of offer and acceptance bonus scheme.

30

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a gaming device having an improved offer and acceptance game and particularly a bonus game. In one embodiment of the present invention, the gaming device provides the player
5 an opportunity to select an offer provided to the player during the bonus game from a plurality of masked selections. A value is associated with each masked selection. The player selects one of the masked selections and the gaming device reveals the value associated with that masked selection. The revealed value is the player's offer. If the player accepts the offer, the player obtains the
10 offer and the bonus game ends. If the player rejects the offer, and the offer is not the final offer, the player may make another selection from the plurality of masked selections. The values may be randomly determined or arranged prior to or during the selection process from a pool of values. The value associated with the rejected offer remains in the pool of values and may be reassociated
15 with another masked selection for the player's subsequent selections. In one embodiment, after each selection the gaming device reveals the values associated with the non-selected masked selections.

In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the gaming device provides the player with a plurality of masked selections. The gaming
20 device briefly reveals to the player one or more of the values which will be associated with one or more of the masked selections. The gaming device conceals all of the values including the revealed value and displays the plurality of selections being shuffled into a different configuration. The player is prompted to pick the selection with the maximum associated value. The
25 gaming device reveals to the player the value associated with the selection picked by the player. The revealed value is the player's offer. If the player selected the maximum value, the player obtains that value as their bonus award and the bonus game ends. If the maximum value is not selected, the player simply obtains the value associated with their selected masked
30 selection and the game ends.

In one alternative embodiment, if the offer is not the final offer, the player may accept the offer or the player may attempt to reselect the maximum

value revealed to the player. If the offer is rejected, the value associated with the rejected offer may be reassociated with another selection and selected again in a subsequent selection by the player. If the offer is rejected, the gaming device displays the plurality of masked selections being reshuffled into a different configuration and the bonus game proceeds as described above. The bonus round continues until either the player accepts an offer or the player has completed a predetermined number of opportunities to select masked selections. In the case where the player rejects all of the offers prior to the last possible offer, the gaming device provides the player with the last offer, which the player cannot reject. It should thus be appreciated that the present invention provides an improved offer and acceptance bonus game in which player, and not the gaming device, selects the outcome of the bonus game and particularly the offers provided to the player. It should also be appreciated that the present invention may be adapted for a primary game.

It is therefore an advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having an improved offer and acceptance game.

Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed disclosure, taken in conjunction with the accompanying sheets of drawings, wherein like numerals refer to like parts, elements, components, steps and processes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1A and 1B are perspective views of alternative embodiments of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a schematic block diagram of the electronic configuration of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 3A is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of one embodiment of the present invention illustrating a plurality of selections which the player can select to obtain an offer.

Fig. 3B is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of one embodiment of the present invention illustrating the offer chosen by the player.

Fig. 4A is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of an

alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a plurality of selections which the player can select to obtain an offer.

Fig. 4B is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a value associated with a masked selection being revealed.

Fig. 4C is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating the gaming device shuffling the plurality of masked selections.

Fig. 4D is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating the plurality of shuffled masked selections with the player can selected to obtain an offer.

Fig. 4E is a front elevation view of the offer selection screen of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a player selecting one of said masked selections.

Fig. 5 is a flow diagram of one preferred embodiment of the present invention, wherein the player selects the outcome of the bonus game and the values associated with any rejected offers may be subsequently selected by the player.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Gaming Device and Electronics

Referring now to the drawings, two embodiments of the gaming device of the present invention are illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B as gaming device 10a and gaming device 10b, respectively. Gaming device 10a and/or gaming device 10b are generally referred to herein as gaming device 10. In one embodiment, gaming device 10 is preferably a slot machine having the controls, displays and features of a conventional slot machine. It is constructed so that a player can operate it while standing or sitting, and gaming device 10 may be mounted in console or cabinet. However, it should be appreciated that gaming device 10 can be constructed as a pub-style tabletop game (not shown) which a player can operate preferably while sitting. Furthermore, gaming device 10 can be constructed with varying cabinet and

display designs, as illustrated by the designs shown in Figs. 1A and 1B. Gaming device 10 can also be implemented as a program code stored in a detachable cartridge for operating a hand-held video game device. Also, gaming device 10 can be implemented as a program code stored on a disk or
5 other memory device which a player can use in a desktop or laptop personal computer or other computerized platform.

Gaming device 10 can incorporate any primary game such as slot, poker, blackjack or keno, any of their bonus triggering events and any of their bonus round games. The symbols and indicia used on and in gaming device
10 10 may be in mechanical, electrical, electronic or video form.

As illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10 includes a coin slot 12 and bill acceptor 14 where the player inserts money, coins or tokens. The player can place coins in the coin slot 12 or paper money in the bill acceptor 14. Other devices could be used for accepting payment such as readers or
15 validators for credit cards or debit cards. When a player inserts money in gaming device 10, a number of credits corresponding to the amount deposited is shown in a credit display 16. After depositing the appropriate amount of money, a player can begin the game by pulling arm 18 or pushing play button 20. Play button 20 can be any play activator used by the player which starts
20 any game or sequence of events in the gaming device.

As shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10 also includes a bet display 22 and a bet one button 24. The player places a bet by pushing the bet one button 24. The player can increase the bet by one credit each time the player pushes the bet one button 24. When the player pushes the bet one
25 button 24, the number of credits shown in the credit display 16 decreases by one, and the number of credits shown in the bet display 22 increases by one. The gaming device can include other wager indicators such as a bet max button.

A player may cash out and thereby receive a number of coins
30 corresponding to the number of remaining credits by pushing a cash out button 26. When the player cashes out, the player receives the coins in a coin payout tray 28. The gaming device 10 may employ other payout mechanisms such as

credit slips redeemable by a cashier or electronically recordable cards which keep track of the player's credits.

Gaming device 10 also includes one or more display devices. The embodiment shown in Fig. 1A includes a central display device 30, and the
5 alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 1B includes a central display device 30 as well as an upper display device 32. Gaming device 10 preferably displays a plurality of reels 34, preferably three to five reels 34 in mechanical or video form at one or more of the display devices. However, it should be appreciated that the display devices can display any visual representation or exhibition,
10 including but not limited to movement of physical objects such as mechanical reels and wheels, dynamic lighting and video images. A display device can be any viewing surface such as glass, a video monitor or screen, a liquid crystal display or any other display mechanism or apparatus. If the reels 34 are in video form, the display device for the video reels 34 is preferably a video
15 monitor .

Each reel 34 displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device 10. Furthermore, gaming device 10 preferably includes speakers 36 for making sounds or playing music.

20 As illustrated in Fig. 2, the general electronic configuration of gaming device 10 preferably includes: a processor 38; a memory device 40 for storing program code or other data; a central display device 30; an upper display device 32; a sound card 42; a plurality of speakers 36; and one or more input devices 44. The processor 38 is preferably a microprocessor or
25 microcontroller-based platform which is capable of displaying images, symbols and other indicia such as images of people, characters, places, things and faces of cards. The memory device 40 can include random access memory (RAM) 46 for storing event data or other data generated or used during a particular game. The memory device 40 can also include read only memory
30 (ROM) 48 for storing program code which controls the gaming device 10 so that it plays a particular game in accordance with applicable game rules and pay tables.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, the player preferably uses the input devices 44, such as pull arm 18, play button 20, the bet one button 24 and the cash out button 26 to input signals into gaming device 10. In certain instances it is preferable to use a touch screen 50 and an associated touch screen controller 52 instead of a conventional video monitor display device. Touch screen 50 and touch screen controller 52 are connected to a video controller 54 and processor 38. A player can make decisions and input signals into the gaming device 10 by touching touch screen 50 at the appropriate places. As further illustrated in Fig. 2, the processor 38 can be connected to coin slot 12 or bill acceptor 14. The processor 38 can be programmed to require a player to deposit a certain amount of money in order to start the game.

It should be appreciated that although a processor 38 and memory device 40 are preferable implementations of the present invention, the present invention can also be implemented using one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's) or other hard-wired devices, or using mechanical devices (collectively or alternatively referred to herein as a "processor"). Furthermore, although the processor 38 and memory device 40 preferably reside on each gaming device 10 unit, it is possible to provide some or all of their functions at a central location such as a network server for communication to a playing station such as over a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), Internet connection, microwave link, and the like. The processor 38 and memory device 40 is generally referred to herein as the computer or controller.

With reference to Figs. 1A, 1B and 2, to operate the gaming device 10 in one embodiment the player must insert the appropriate amount of money or tokens at coin slot 12 or bill acceptor 14 and then pull the arm 18 or push the play button 20. The reels 34 will then begin to spin. Eventually, the reels 34 will come to a stop. As long as the player has credits remaining, the player can spin the reels 34 again. Depending upon where the reels 34 stop, the player may or may not win additional credits.

In addition to winning credits in this manner, preferably gaming device 10 also gives players the opportunity to win credits in a bonus round. This

type of gaming device 10 will include a program which will automatically begin a bonus round when the player has achieved a qualifying condition in the game. This qualifying condition can be a particular arrangement of indicia on a display device. The gaming device 10 preferably uses a video-based central display device 30 to enable the player to play the bonus round. In one embodiment, the qualifying condition is a predetermined combination of indicia appearing on a plurality of reels 34. As illustrated in the five reel slot game shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, the qualifying condition could be the number seven appearing on three adjacent reels 34 along a payline 56. It should be appreciated that the present invention can include one or more paylines displayed in a horizontal and/or diagonal fashion.

Offer Acceptance Game

For purposes of this description, "bonus scheme" or "bonus game" refers to the entire process of the player obtaining a bonus award. The term "bonus round" refers to each time the player has an opportunity in a bonus scheme or bonus game to accept or reject an offer. Referring now to Figs. 3A and 3B, one embodiment of the bonus game of the present invention provides a screen or display 100 which is preferably a touch screen that enables the player to make a selection to obtain or be offered an offer. The game preferably provides a plurality of masked selections which the player may select from. A value is associated with each masked selection and the selections do not initially reveal or display the value associated with each selection. It should be appreciated that the associated value may be a credit amount, a dollar amount or any other award, such as a car.

In one embodiment, the gaming device randomly selects the values to be associated with the masked selections from a pre-determined pool of values. Alternatively, the gaming device may have multiple pre-determined pools of values to select from. In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device randomly selects the values from a pre-determined range of value amounts. The value associated with each selection is preferably randomly determined prior to each time the player is allowed to pick a masked selection in each bonus round. In another embodiment, the value associated with each

selection may be randomly determined after the player has rejected a pre-determined number of selections.

The number of possible values to be associated with the masked selections may be greater than, less than or equal to the number of possible masked selections for the player to select. In one embodiment, once a value
5 is associated with a masked selection, that value may not be associated with another masked selection during a particular bonus round. In another embodiment, the same value may be associated with a plurality of masked selections in each bonus round.

10 Referring now to Figs. 3A and 3B, in one example of the present invention, there are five selections 102, 104, 106, 108 and 110 respectively labeled A, B, C, D and E. Each selection has a value associated with it. The player chooses one of selection A, selection B, selection C, selection D and selection E to reveal an associated value. The revealed value is the player's
15 offer. When the player makes a selection as indicated by highlighted selection 112 in Fig. 3B, the gaming device reveals the value associated with the chosen selection. In Fig. 3B, the player picked selection D which had an associated value of fifty credits, and thus the player's offer is fifty credits. Appropriate messages such as "SELECT A, B, C, D OR E TO OBTAIN AN
20 OFFER" and "YOU SELECTED D WHICH IS AN OFFER OF 50 CREDITS" are preferably provided to the player visually, or through suitable audio or audiovisual displays. It should be appreciated that selections 102, 104, 106 and 110 remain masked. In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device reveals the maximum value associated with a masked selection as discussed
25 below.

As further illustrated in Fig. 3B, the gaming device provides the player with an offer and acceptance display, which is preferably a touch screen which provides the player with the offer 116, and the number of remaining opportunities to select a masked selection or offers 122 the player has
30 remaining in the bonus game. The number of opportunities for the player may be preset or randomly determined. For increased entertainment, the number of remaining opportunities in the bonus game may not be revealed to the

player. If the player has remaining opportunities to select a masked selection; then the player may accept the offer using an accept indicator 118 or reject the offer using a reject indicator 120. If the player accepts the offer, the gaming device provides the player with the offer, the player cannot obtain any more
5 offers and the bonus game terminates. If the player rejects the offer, except if the award offer is the final award offer, then the gaming device randomly reassigns or reassociates the values with the masked selections and a subsequent bonus round proceeds as described above. If the player rejects all of the offers (prior to the last offer), the gaming device provides the player with
10 the last offer. The player cannot reject the last offer.

It should thus be appreciated that if the player rejects an offer, the value associated with that rejected offer is available for the gaming device to reassign or reassociate with another masked selection in subsequent rounds. In the above example, if the player rejects the offer of fifty credits, then the fifty
15 credits value could be reassociated with another selection in subsequent rounds. It should be appreciated that after an offer is rejected, in subsequent rounds the gaming device may select values to be associated with the masked selections from the same pool or from a different pool of values. In the embodiment where a value may only be associated with one selection, after
20 the value is revealed and rejected by player, the gaming device reinserts the rejected value into the pool of values to be reassociated with other masked selections in subsequent bonus rounds (i.e., allows that value to be associated with another masked selection in a bonus round).

Referring generally to Figs. 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D and 4E in an alternative
25 embodiment of the present invention provides a screen or display 200 which is preferably a touch screen that enables the player to make a selection to obtain or be offered an offer. As seen in Fig. 4A, the game provides a plurality of selections from which the player may select. There are five selections 132, 134, 136, 138 and 140 respectively labeled A, B, C, D and E. For purposes of
30 illustrating the selections being shuffled, the selections are also respectively marked I, II, III, IV and V, which are 186, 188, 190, 192 and 194, respectively. It should be appreciated that the selections are masked and the additional

markings of I, II, III, IV and V are only to illustrate the shuffling process and are not displayed to the player. A predetermined or randomly determined value is associated with each selection and the selections do not initially display the value.

5 In one embodiment, the gaming device reveals to the player the values associated with one or multiple of the selections. In one preferred embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 4B, the value revealed to the player 130 is the maximum value the player may obtain. In another embodiment, the value revealed is the minimum possible value the player may obtain. In another
10 embodiment, the value revealed is an average of all of the possible values the player may obtain. In another embodiment, the value revealed is randomly determined from the pool of values that the player may obtain. In one embodiment of the present invention, using a re-reveal indicator, a player may prompt the gaming device to re-reveal the value or values associated with one
15 or more of the selections.

As illustrated in Fig. 4C, the gaming device displays the selections being mixed or shuffled into a new configuration 205. It should be appreciated that the entire mixing or shuffling process could be displayed to the player or could be hidden from the player. In an alternative embodiment, this process
20 could simply be the association process whereby values are associated with the selections. As indicated in Figs. 4A, 4B and 4C, by the reordering of I, II, III, IV and V, which are 186, 188, 190, 192 and 194, respectively, in Figs. 4A and 4B, into the order of II, III, V, IV and I, which are 188, 190, 194, 192, 186, respectively, in Fig. 4C, the selections have been shuffled.

25 As illustrated in Fig. 4D, upon completion of the mixing, shuffling or value selection association, the gaming device prompts the player to pick one of the selections 210. In this example, the player must choose one of the five selections A, B, C, D or E, 132, 134, 136, 138 or 140, respectively. As illustrated in Fig. 4E, the player picks selection "C" highlighted on the display
30 panel and the gaming device reveals the value associated with selection "C" 144. The revealed value is the player's offer. Appropriate messages such as "SELECT A, B, C, D OR E TO OBTAIN BONUS AWARD OFFER" and "YOU

SELECTED C WHICH IS AN OFFER OF 20" are preferably provided to the player visually, or through suitable audio or audiovisual displays. In the example, as illustrated in Fig. 4E, the player picked selection "C" which had an associated value of 20 credits. After the gaming device displays the value associated with the picked selection, the player may accept or reject the revealed value as their offer as described above.

A preferred embodiment of the present invention involves the gaming device displaying three shells to the player. One of the shells is briefly raised to reveal a value underneath or a graphical representation of an award, such as a car symbol. The shell is lowered to re-conceal the value or award symbol. The gaming device displays the three shells being shuffled into a new configuration. The player is prompted to select the shell that is concealing the previously revealed value or award symbol. If the player selects the correct shell, then the player is awarded that value or award symbol. If the player does not select the correct shell, then the bonus scheme may provide the value or award symbol, if any, underneath the selected shell and terminate the bonus game or proceed as described above. It should be appreciated that in any embodiment, the player has a limited number of opportunities to select the shells.

Referring now to Fig. 5, a flow chart of this preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated, wherein the player attempts to select a particular selection after that selection has been mixed or shuffled among a plurality of identical selections. Upon a sequence triggering event, as indicated by the block 162, the game provides the player a plurality of opportunities as indicated by block 163. It should be noted that each time the player picks a selection, the opportunities to pick selections in the bonus scheme is reduced by one, until the player has no remaining opportunities to pick selections. The game randomly selects values from a pool of differing values and associates these selected values with a plurality of shells as indicated by block 164. The shells are displayed and the game briefly reveals a value associated with one shell as indicated by block 166. The game then displays the plurality of shells being mixed or shuffled into a new configuration,

as indicated by block 168. The player is prompted to choose the shell concealing the previously revealed value as indicated by block 170. If the player does not pick a shell as indicated by diamond 172, the game awaits the players decision as indicated by block 170. The value associated with the picked shell is displayed as indicated by block 174. If the value associated with the picked shell matches the previously revealed value, then a win display sequence is activated, the player is awarded the value associated with the picked shell as indicated by block 178 and the bonus scheme terminates as indicated by block 181. If the value associated with the picked shell does not match the previously revealed value, and if the player has no remaining opportunities to pick selections, then a player loss sequence is activated and the bonus game terminates as indicated by block 181. It should be appreciated that the player may be awarded a consolation prize as indicated by block 182. If the value associated with the picked shell does not match the previously revealed value and if the player has at least one remaining opportunities to pick selections in the bonus round as indicated by diamond 180, then the gaming device briefly reveals a value associated with one shell as indicated by block 166 and the game proceeds as described above.

While the present invention is described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiments, it should be appreciated that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, and is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the claims. Modifications and variations in the present invention may be made without departing from the novel aspects of the invention as defined in the claims, and this application is limited only by the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

The invention is hereby claimed as follows:

- 5 1. A gaming device having a game comprising:
a plurality of values;
a plurality of player selectable masked selections;
a display device; and
a processor adapted to communicate with the display device, said
10 processor and said display device adapted to:
 (a) associate said values with said selections,
 (b) enable a player to select one of said selections,
 (c) reveal the value associated with the selected selection to the player,
 (d) enable the player to accept or reject the revealed value,
15 (e) repeat steps (a) to (d) at least once if said player rejects said
revealed value.
2. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of values
are randomly selected from at least one pool of values.
- 20 3. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is
adapted to randomly determine the value associated with each selection.
4. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the number of values is
25 equal to the number of selections.
5. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the number of values is
greater than the number of selections.
- 30 6. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the number of values is
less than the number of selections.

7. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is adapted to associate one of said values with each of said selections.

8. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is adapted to associate said values with said selections after the player has rejected a preset number of revealed values.

9. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein each said value is only associated with one selection.

10. The gaming device of Claim 9, wherein said values may be associated with a plurality of selections.

11. A gaming device having a game comprising:
a plurality of values;
a plurality of player selectable selections;
a display device;
a processor which communicates with said display device, associates said values with said selections, displays to a player the association between at least one of the values associated with one of the selections and said selection, which causes the display device to display the shuffling of the selectable selections, enables the player to select one of the selections, and provides the player the value associated with the selected selection.

12. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein said processor causes the display device to reveal the values associated with non-chosen selections.

13. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein said processor causes the display device to reveal the maximum value associated with said selections.

14. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein said processor causes

the display device to reveal the minimum value associated with said selections.

15 15. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein said processor randomly determines which value associated with said selections to reveal to the player.

10 16. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein said processor causes the display device to reveal a plurality but not all of values associated with said selections.

15 17. The gaming device of Claim 11, which includes means for enabling the player to cause the processor to re-reveal a revealed value associated with said selections.

15 18. A method for operating a game of a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) triggering the game;
- (b) associating a plurality of values with a plurality of selections;
- 20 (c) displaying said plurality of selections;
- (d) revealing one of said values associated with one of said selections to the player;
- (e) enabling a player to pick a selection; and
- (f) communicating said value associated with said picked selection
- 25 to said player as an offer.

19. The method of Claim 18, which further includes the steps of:

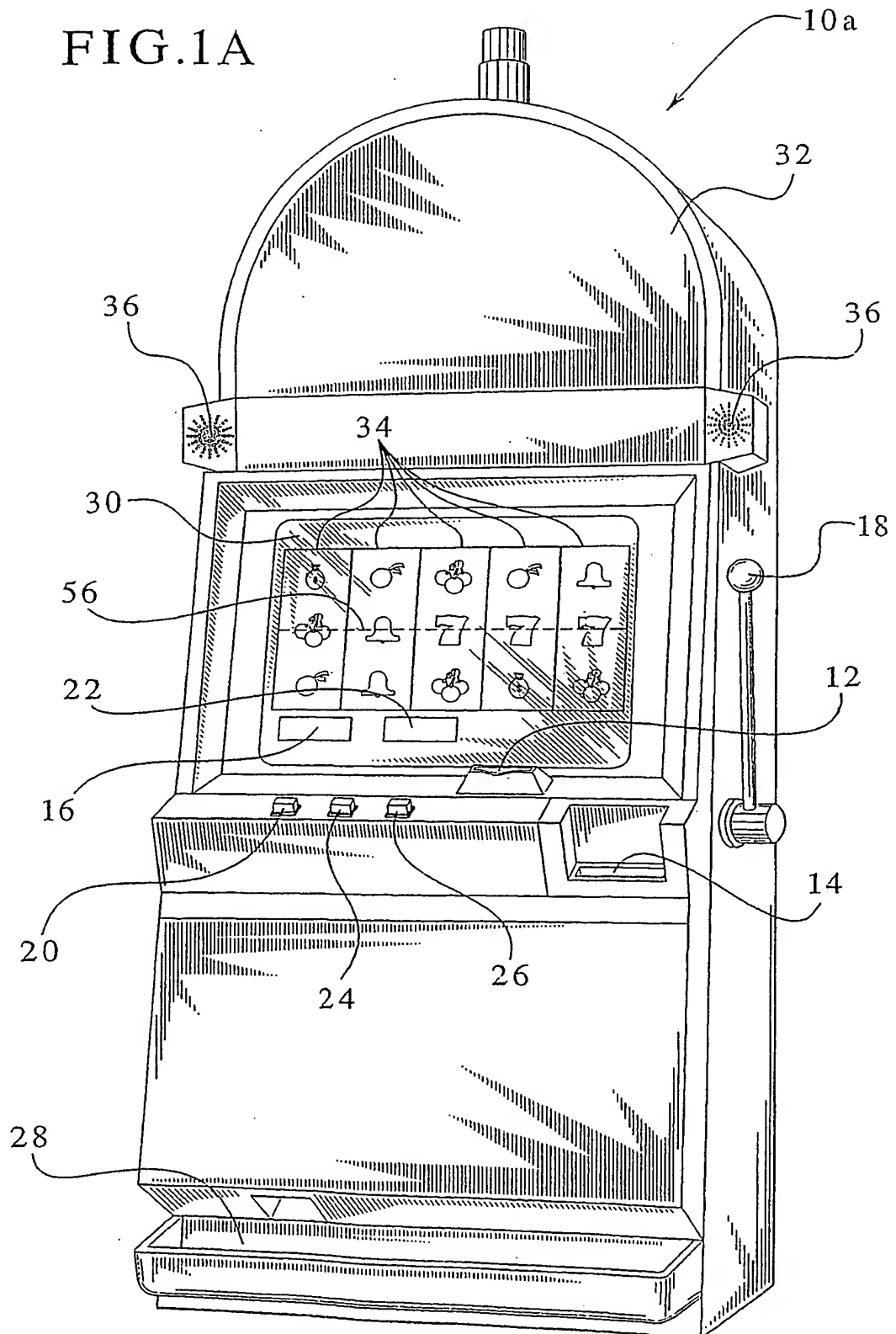
- (g) enabling said player to accept or reject said offer;
- (h) repeating steps (b) through (f) if said player rejects said offer and
- 30 the offer is not a last offer;
- (i) providing the offer to the player if the player accepts said offer or if the offer is said last offer.

20. The method of Claim 18, wherein the value revealed to said player is the maximum offer.

21. A method for operating a game of a gaming device, said method
5 comprising the steps of:
- (a) triggering the game;
 - (b) associating a plurality of values with a plurality of selections;
 - (c) displaying said plurality of selections;
 - (d) revealing one of said values associated with one of said
10 selections to the player;
 - (e) displaying a mixing of the selections;
 - (f) enabling a player to pick a selection; and
 - (g) communicating said value associated with said picked selection
to the player.

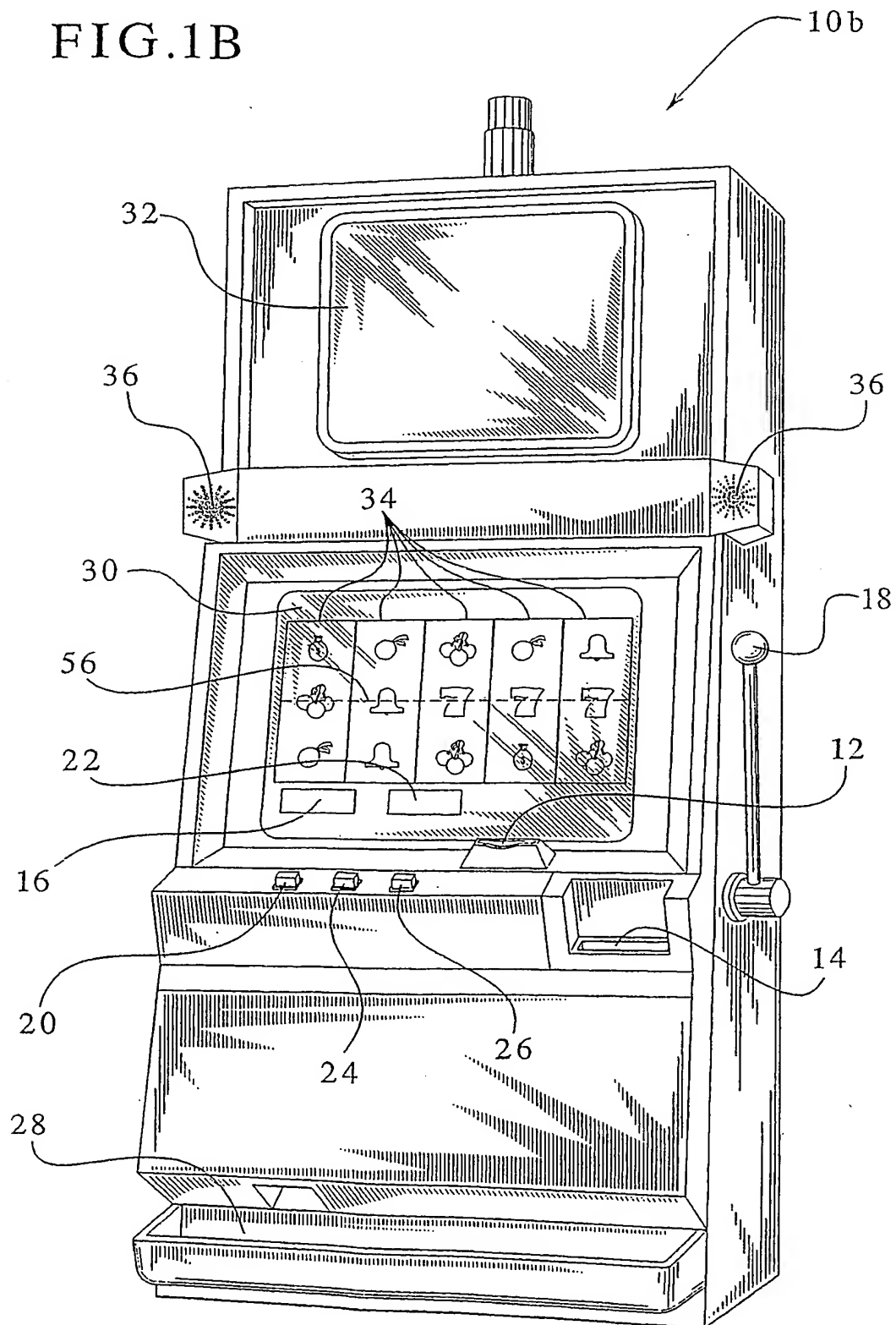
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FIG. 1A



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FIG.1B



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FIG. 2

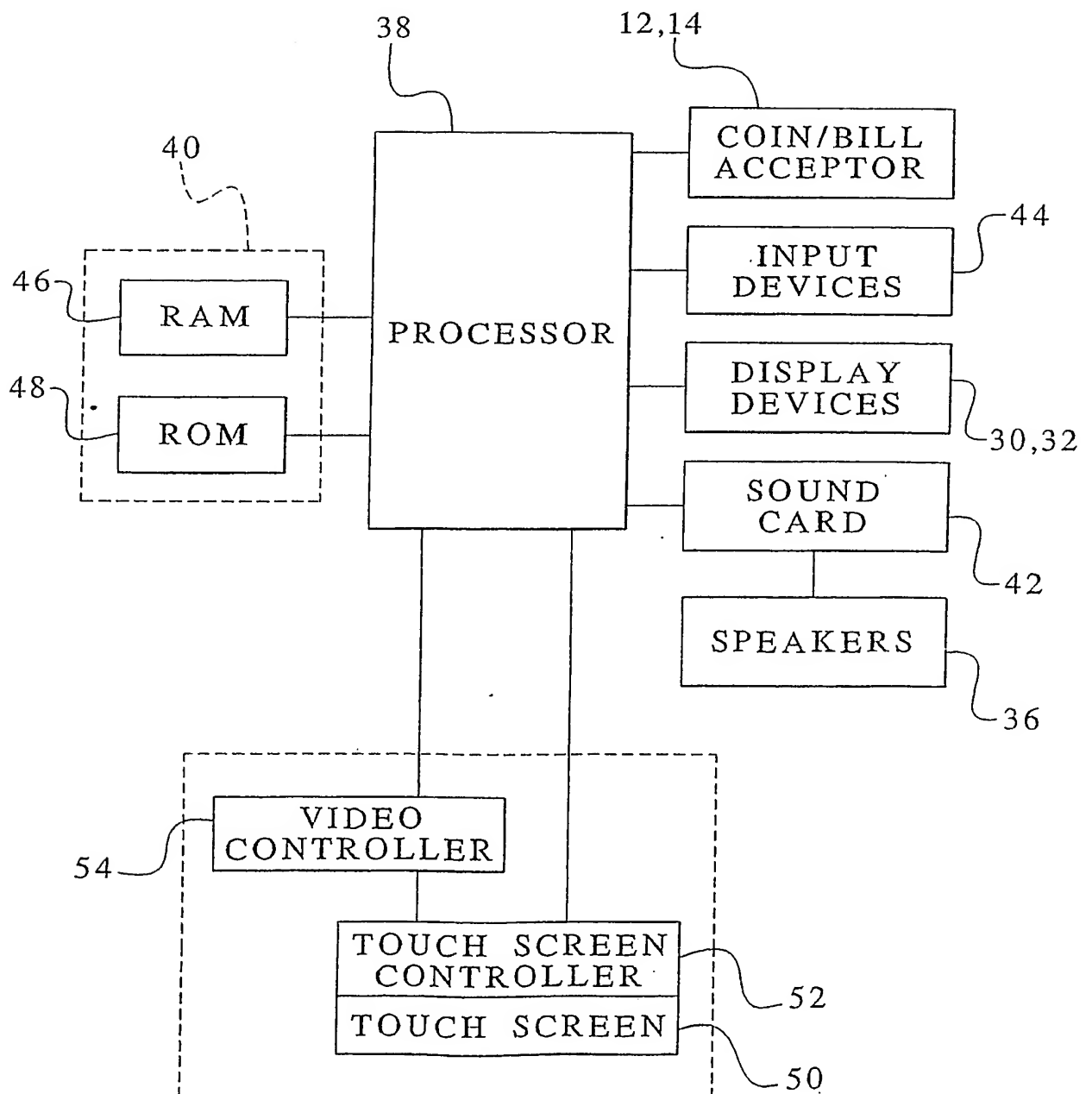


FIG. 3A

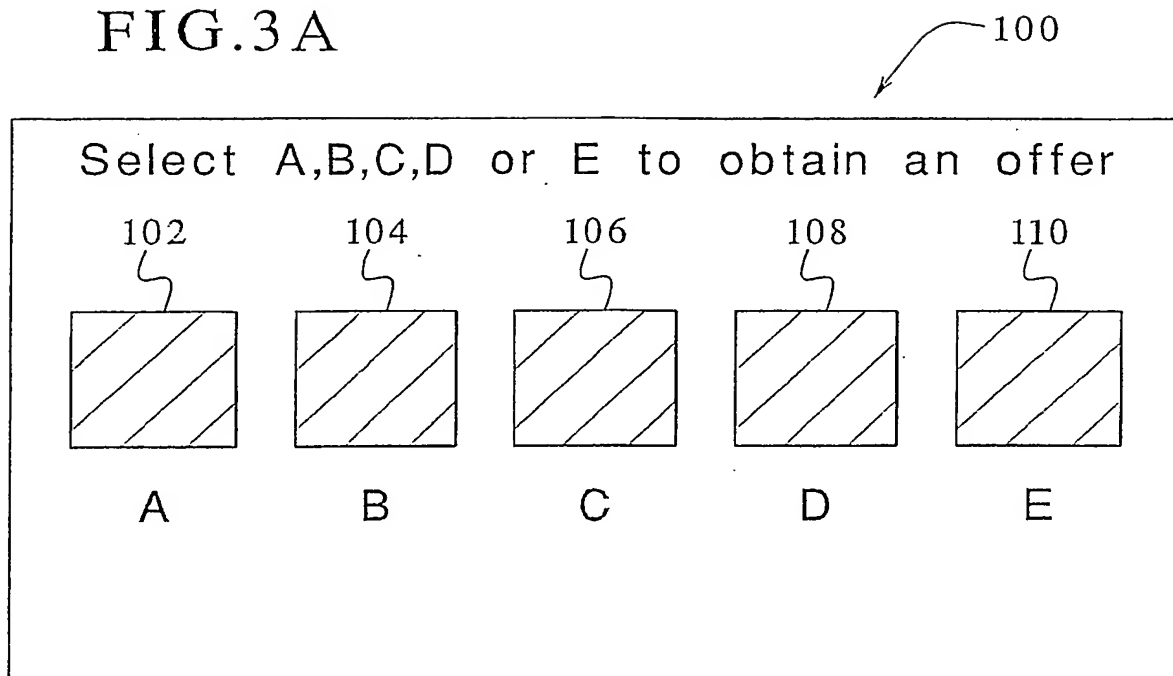
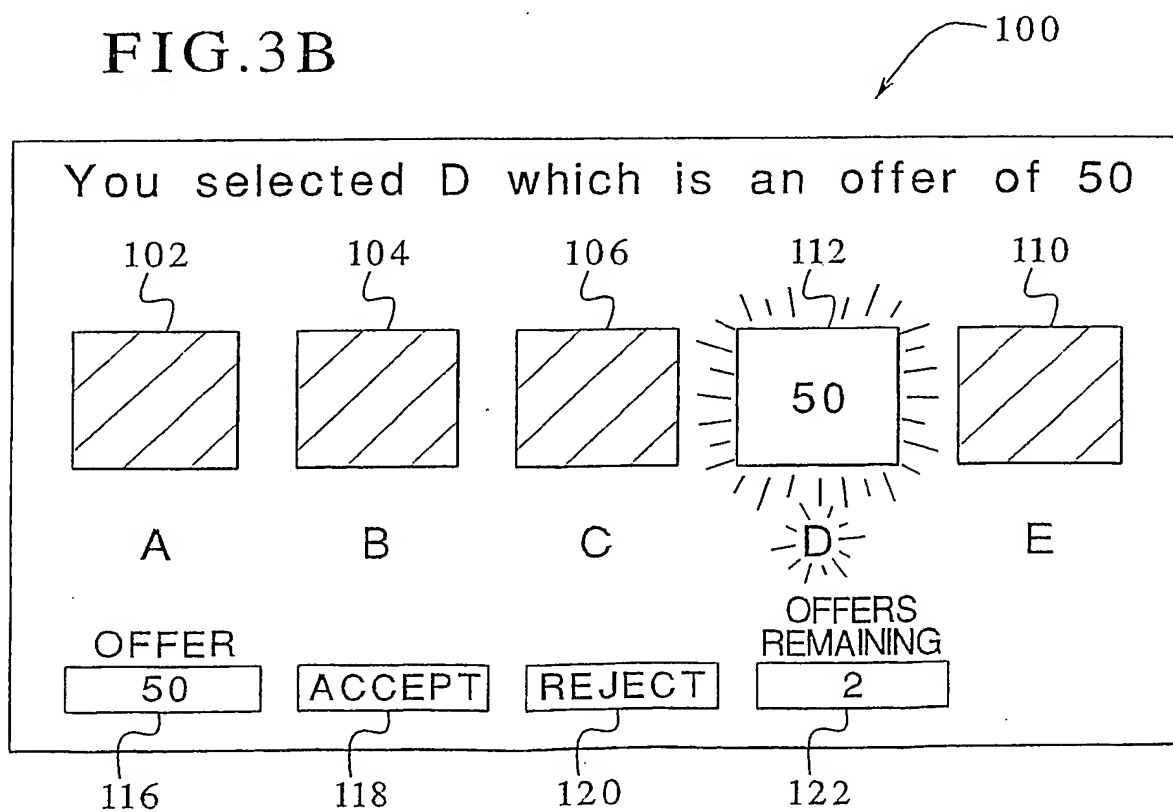


FIG. 3B



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FIG. 4A

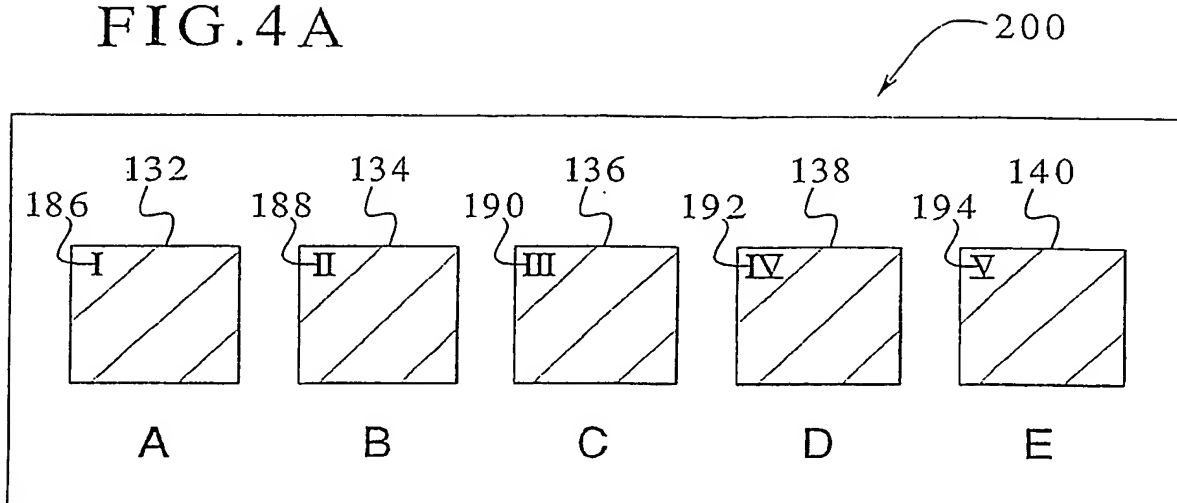


FIG. 4B

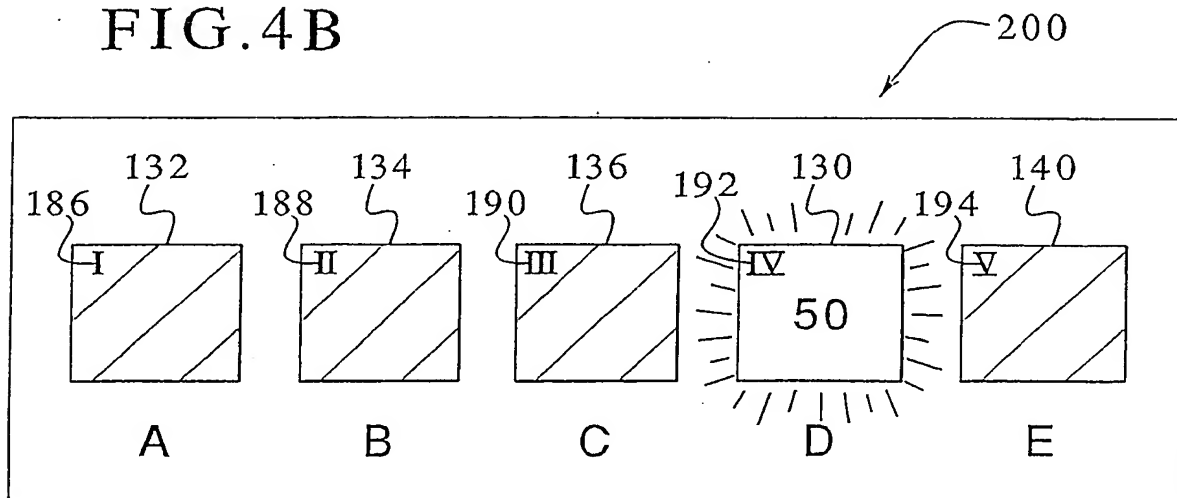
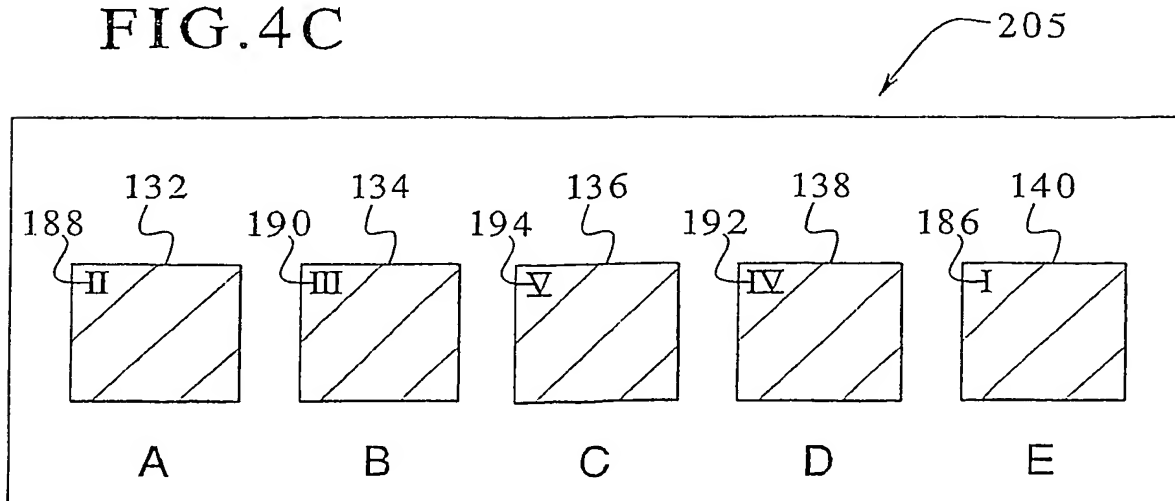


FIG. 4C



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FIG. 4D

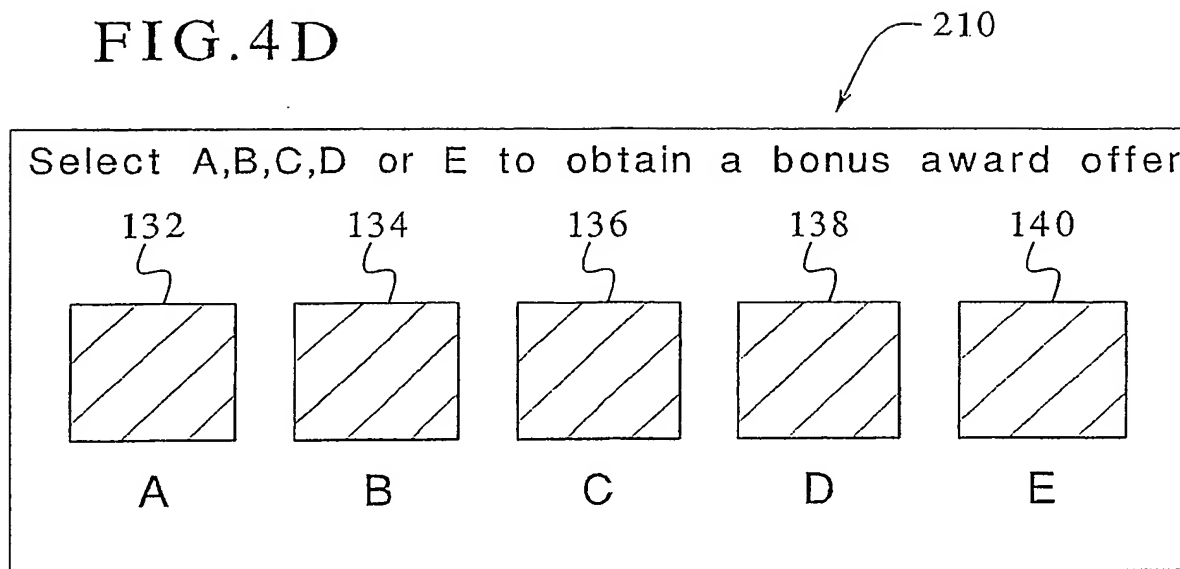
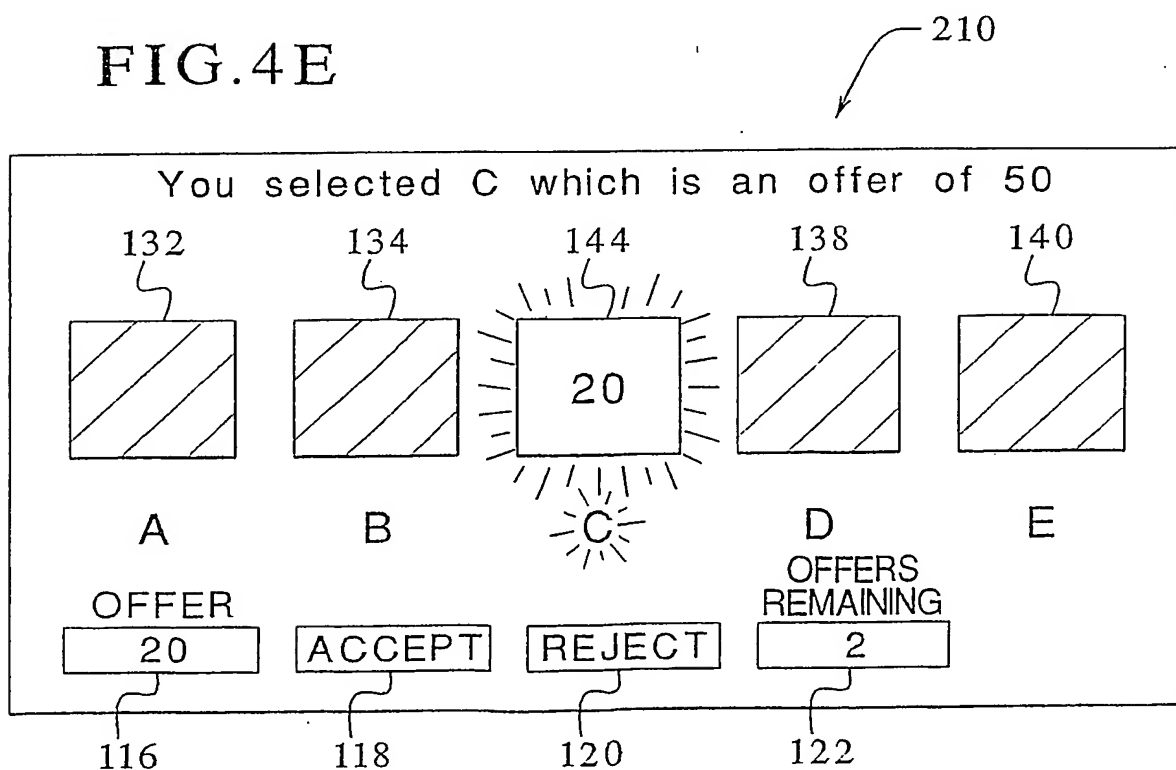
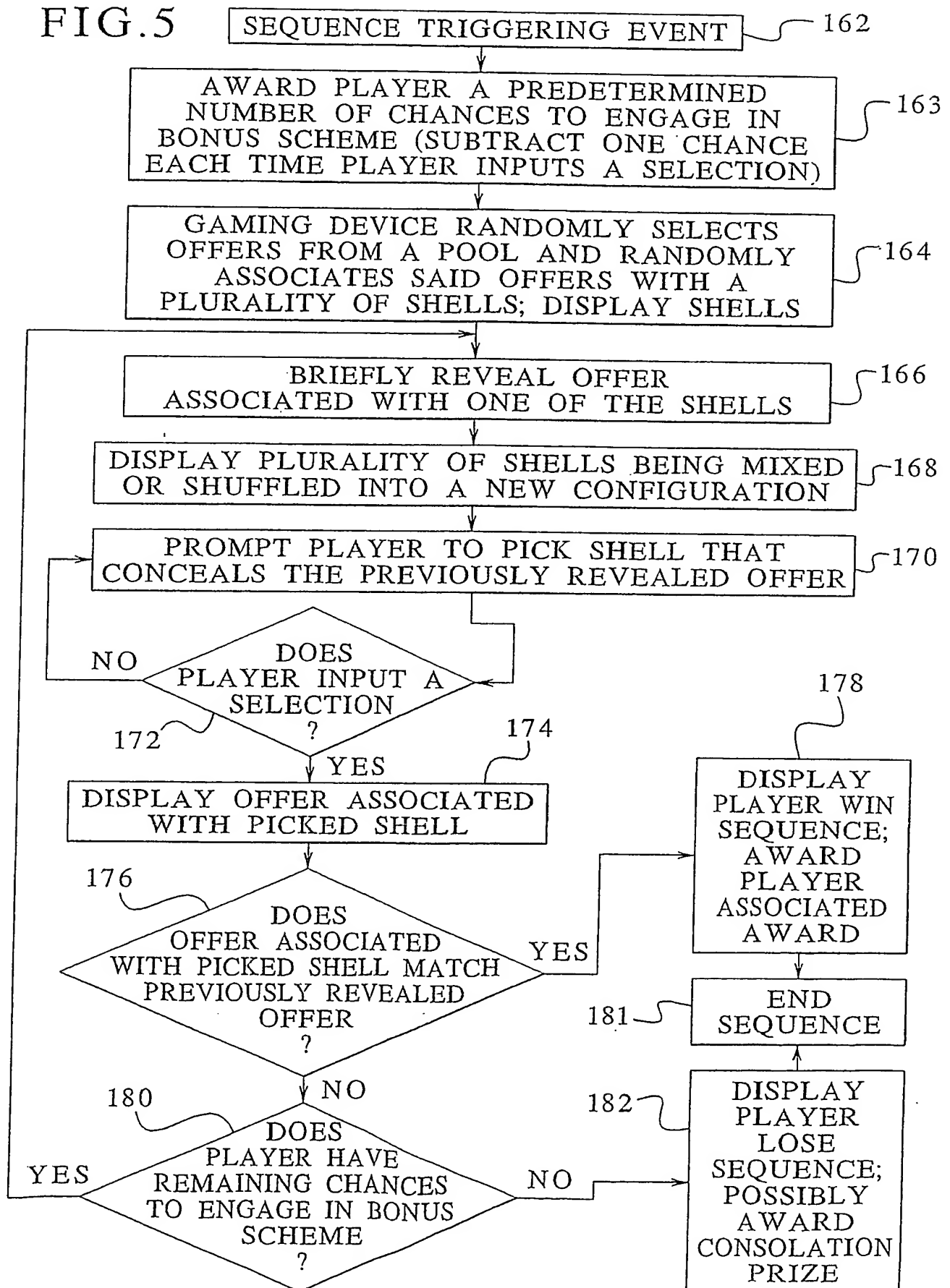


FIG. 4E



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FIG. 5



PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 112300-1335	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(day/month/year) 30/07/2003
International application No. PCT/US 03/ 05030	International filing date(day/month/year) 19/02/2003	(Earliest) Priority date(day/month/year) 28/02/2002
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC G07F17/32		
Applicant IGT		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that no international search report will be established on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
 - a. ☐ scientific theories.
 - b. ☐ mathematical theories
 - c. ☐ plant varieties.
 - d. ☐ animal varieties.
 - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
 - f. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
 - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
 - h. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
 - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
 - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
 - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
 - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
 - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.

2. ☒ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the description
☒ the claims
☐ the drawings


3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

4. Further comments: see further information sheet

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority


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Authorized officer

Katrin Sommermeyer

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see PCT International Search Guidelines, Chapter VIII, items 1 to 3).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.